

YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

Topic Descriptions

Committee: Group of 20

Chair: Sayuri Shree

Topic 1: Global Business and International Trade

Introduction & Background

Global business and international trade are vital components of the modern interconnected world economy. As multinational corporations (**MNCs**) expand their operations across borders, they encounter various challenges, including **fragmentation** and corruption. Fragmentation in a supply chain involves distributing the production process among suppliers and manufacturers across different regions. Supply chains used to be simple, usually involving only a few companies and confined to a particular geographic area, but now they are complex and global, involving hundreds of companies across multiple countries. Fragmented markets provide advantageous opportunities for **globalization** and **market expansion**, allowing businesses to boost revenue, but are characterized by disparities across varying regions. In many cases, MNCs take advantage of these **disparities**, such as cheaper labor in developing countries with more lenient regulations. This often leads to the pervasive issue of corruption in especially developing countries that often entwines local business practices and governmental operations with established and influential multinational corporations, hindering fair competition and distribution of resources amongst competing businesses.

Current Status

Market fragmentation is commonplace among many big brands (for example, Nike and Apple) with global supply chains. Power imbalances in global supply chains are evident in Apple's relationship with Foxconn, where Foxconn's poor working conditions and exploitation of employees drew criticism and Apple faced scrutiny for benefiting from low labor costs and unethical practices. Fragmentation also creates barriers to entry for small and medium enterprises, limiting their potential for growth with the existence of a firmly established business. **Corruption** within multinational corporations often undermines trust and integrity in the global business environment, hurting companies' reputations, but can also make it difficult to foster **competition** by maintaining an MNC's influence. For instance, the cases of Siemens AG, Diagnostic Products Corp, and Pfizer in China show how local management concealed bribery by altering financial reports, highlighting organizational corruption. Specific individuals bribed officials to meet sales targets, further exemplifying corrupt practices. This disregard for corporate governance undermined accountability and transparency, tarnishing their reputations, but allowing them to run as powerful businesses until caught.

Despite **legislative efforts** to combat corruption, such as the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and the UK Bribery Act (both of which prohibit corruption - especially bribery - and establish consequences for violators), instances of corruption continue to plague various industries. Not only that, combative efforts could hurt the global economy. According to a 2023 IMF paper, "increasing international trade restrictions could lead to a long-term decline of up to 7 percent in global economic output, or approximately US\$7.4 trillion." However, allowing corruption to continue hinders sustainable economic development on a global scale, amplifying disparities between developed and developing nations with higher import prices, decreasing job stability, and lower living standards for offshore countries.

Themes to Consider

Strengthening international regulatory frameworks is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by fragmented markets and corruption. This involves fostering **collaboration** among governments, international organizations, and businesses to coordinate **trade processes** and promote fair competition. Also, enhancing accountability within multinational corporations is essential to mitigate corruption risks, but with limited control over private businesses, nations must enforce practices that work around limitations to promote transparency. Competition is critical for a free market to survive, however, **freedom** in the market can hinder said competition as it's very difficult for newer, smaller businesses to grow. As a unified society, nations must work to maintain a global market that promotes growth while still allowing multinational corporations to enjoy their rights as private companies.

Discussion Questions

1. As some of the most economically influential nations of the world, how should members of the G20 balance market freedom and regulation to maintain harmony in the global business scene?
2. How should global business practices be reformed to ensure that economic benefits are distributed more equitably among nations, communities, and competitors?
3. What role do ethical business practices play in mitigating corruption within multinational corporations, and how can they be enforced effectively?

Resources

1. Team, Investopedia. "Fragmentation: Definition, examples, pros and cons in business." Investopedia, 10 Jan. 2023, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fragmentation.asp#:~:text=Disadvantages%20of%20Fragmentation-.Advantages.companies%20can%20cut%20their%20costs.>

(Highly Recommend) Description: Goes into the concept of fragmentation in business - its definition, examples, pros, and cons.

2. Jenkins, Abby. "Supply Chain Fragmentation Explained." Oracle NetSuite, 30 Nov. 2023, www.netsuite.com/portal/resource/articles/erp/supply-chain-fragmentation.shtml.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Explains the concept of fragmentation in the market with examples and details for various types of fragmentation.

3. The concept of fragmented labour markets. 28 June 2021, <https://bos.cbs.dk/the-concept-of-fragmented-labour-markets/#:~:text=Fragmentation%20is%20evident%20where%20workers.dominant%20in%20particular%20occupational%20groups.>

Description: Highlights the increasing diversity and insecurity in employment relationships, specifically low-wage and non-standard workers, in the context of fragmented labor markets.

4. Duley, Susan. Foreign Corruption by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) – IACA Alumni Magazine.

<http://magazine.iaca.int/foreign-corruption-by-multinational-corporations-mnacs>.

Description: Explains the causes and consequences of corruption within multinational corporations (MNCs) and the efficacy of initiatives in combating corruption.

5. Global Trade Liberalization and the Developing Countries -- an IMF Issues Brief. 8 Nov. 2001, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2001/110801.htm>.

Description: Provides an analysis of the benefits of international trade liberalization for economic growth and poverty reduction.

6. Lsanchez. "Ethical Considerations in International Business." Uttyler, 27 Sept. 2022, <http://online.uttyler.edu/degrees/business/mba/general/ethical-considerations-in-international-business>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Focuses on the ethical challenges faced by businesses expanding internationally such as problems related to labor standards, cultural differences, and corporate social responsibilities.

7. Gonzalez, Anabel. "The Changing Trade Landscape: Trade Agreements, Globalization and Inequality." World Bank, 14 Sept. 2016, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2016/09/14/the-changing-trade-landscape-trade-agreements-globalization-and-inequality>.

Description: This is an interview providing insights into the importance of international trade and the complexities surrounding free trade agreements.

8. Mbhusari. "Goeconomic Fragmentation and Net-zero Targets." Atlantic Council, 23 Apr. 2024, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/bretton-woods-2-0/geoeconomic-fragmentation-and-net-zero-targets/#:~:text=The%20costs%20of%20GEF%20are,productivity%2C%20and%20lower%20living%20standards>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: This report outlines how fragmentation impacts the world and how its effects can be mitigated.

9. Apple and Foxconn: Power Imbalances in Global Supply Chains. www.businessthink.unsw.edu.au/articles/apple-foxconn-power-imbances-global-supply-chains.

Description: An article about the unethical aspects of globally fragmented supply chains with specific reference to Apple and Foxconn.

Topic 2: Refugee Crisis Management

Introduction & Background

The refugee and displacement crisis is a global issue driven by various factors, such as **conflict** and **persecution**. Displaced people forcibly flee their homes but not necessarily their countries; refugees are people who cross borders. Over half of the world's refugees come from just three countries that have been plagued with **violence** for years: Ukraine, Syria, and Afghanistan. As millions of people are displaced from their homes, there is a pressing need for humanitarian assistance. Although there have been many aid efforts for displaced persons, their **rights are often violated**, which makes addressing the endeavor more complex. For instance, there are many refugees from Syria in her neighboring countries, Türkiye, Jordan, and Lebanon, but "the continuous worry of arrest or possible deportation due to the lack of valid residency documents as well as work permits is affecting every aspect of their lives, while the limited access to education is impacting their children's future." For countries that statistically host some of the most refugees in the world, it is extremely disheartening to imagine the vast numbers of people moving to a safer place only to find their rights further violated.

Current Status

The crisis continues to worsen, with unprecedented numbers of individuals seeking refuge in other countries. The global refugee **population rose** from 27.1 million in 2021 to 37.6 million by the end of 2023, contributing to a total of 117.3 million people worldwide being forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and events severely disrupting public order. Host nations, particularly those with limited resources, are under immense pressure to accommodate the influx of refugees. They often **struggle to provide** the necessary infrastructure and services, such as housing, medical care, and schooling, to support the growing population of displaced individuals. This can lead to overcrowded refugee camps, insufficient medical supplies, and overwhelmed educational systems, exacerbating the challenges faced by both refugees and the host communities. Considering that 75 percent of the world's refugees are hosted by low- and middle-income countries, focusing on the **development** of host countries in addition to those feeding into the refugee crisis is essential to ensure global progress in this matter.

Themes to Consider

The international community coordinates many humanitarian responses to address the immediate needs of displaced persons, including shelter, food, and medical care. However, countries must address the **effectiveness** of these measures, as well as ensure that the **rights** of refugees and migrants are protected throughout their journey and upon arrival in host countries. This involves not only providing immediate relief but also creating sustainable systems that can **adequately** support displaced populations in the long term. Beyond just tackling displacement, governments and international organizations must collaborate to address the **underlying causes** of sources (such as conflict, persecution, and economic instability) of displacement - that is, the factors leading to violence and oppression, which are usually developmental issues - and promote durable solutions for refugees while tackling their **mistreatment**.

Discussion Questions

1. How can countries improve effective coordination and collaboration in providing proper humanitarian assistance to displaced populations?
2. What role do human rights frameworks and international conventions play in safeguarding the rights of refugees and migrants, and how can they be effectively enforced?
3. In what ways can development aid be leveraged to address the various root causes of displacement along with efforts to tackle the refugee crisis?

Resources

1. “Thousands of Refugees and Migrants Suffer Extreme Rights Abuses On.” Africa Renewal, 4 Sept. 2020,
<http://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/thousands-refugees-and-migrants-suffer-extreme-rights-abuses-journeys-africa%E2%80%99s-mediterranean>.

Description: Highlights the severe human rights abuses and high mortality rates faced by refugees and migrants traveling from West and East Africa to Africa's Mediterranean coast.

2. UNHCR US -. “Global Trends | UNHCR US.” UNHCR US,
<http://www.unhcr.org/us/global-trends>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: This is a report on global forced displacement with trends in 2023. Highly recommend and look for 2024 data if available.

3. “Rights Refused: 5 Fundamental Needs Denied to Refugees | Oxfam International.” Oxfam International, 25 May 2022,
<http://www.oxfam.org/en/rights-refused-5-fundamental-needs-denied-refugees#:~:text=Families%20are%20ripped%20apart%20and,Be%20protected%20against%20violence>.

Description: Provides five general rights that are often not respected when it comes to refugees and provides anecdotal instances for each as well.

4. UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. “| UNHCR.” UNHCR,
<http://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.

Description: Provides comprehensive information on forcibly displaced populations, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people.

5. IRC. “Refugee Facts, Statistics and FAQs.” The IRC, 20 Oct. 2023,
<http://www.rescue.org/article/facts-about-refugees-key-facts-faqs-and-statistics>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Discusses comprehensive information about refugees, including key facts, statistics, and answers to common questions.

6. “From Survival to Self-Reliance - GlobalWA Members Untangle the Complexities of the Refugee Crisis - Global Washington.” Global Washington, 20 July 2023,

<http://globalwa.org/issue-brief/from-survival-to-self-reliance-globalwa-members-untangle-the-complexities-of-the-refugee-crisis>.

Description: Discusses how various GlobalWA member organizations address the multifaceted challenges faced by refugees.

7. "Refugees and Internally Displaced People." Theirworld, 4 Aug. 2022, theirworld.org/resources/refugees-and-internally-displaced-people/#:~:text=Internally%20displaced%20people%20have%20also,still%20within%20their%20own%20country.

Description: Basic information, such as definitions, on displacement with statistics (use the sources above instead for more current data though).

8. Martin. "Global Partnerships - United Nations Sustainable Development." United Nations Sustainable Development, 20 Oct. 2023, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships.

Description: Describes Goal 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which is about multinational collaboration and support.

Topic 3: Technology Regulation

Introduction & Background

The rapid advancement of technology, particularly in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), has led to significant societal benefits and economic growth. However, it has also raised concerns about issues such as **data privacy** and **cybersecurity**. AI-driven decision-making is getting increasingly integrated into society, allowing users to make faster, accurate, and consistent decisions by capitalizing on analyses done by AI. Such AI systems depend on large datasets, often including personal and sensitive information. Individuals may inadvertently share personal data with AI systems, which could then be at risk of being exploited or misused. The **ethical implications** of technology have always been a major topic of discussion, and the growing prevalence of technology in daily life simply exacerbates related concerns.

Current Status

The emergence of technologies has outpaced **regulatory frameworks**, leaving gaps in oversight and accountability. This has resulted in challenges such as algorithmic biases and data breaches. For instance, researchers discovered that a widely used healthcare algorithm underestimated the needs of Black patients, leading to significantly less care for them. Algorithmic bias often occurs due to the underrepresentation of certain populations in the training data or because pre-existing societal biases are embedded in the data. Additionally, as per a report conducted in early 2024, 77% of surveyed companies identified breaches to their AI in the past year. This can be detrimental considering the vast amounts of private information that is used by AI systems.

Governments and international organizations are working on how to strike the right balance between **fostering innovation** and **protecting** the public. For example, the EU's AI Act regulates the use of the technology based on risk level, Italy banned ChatGPT for a short period, and other governments such as the U.K. are establishing outlines for technology usage. Although regulatory actions are in good intent, there can be oversight in considering the **public dependence** on the technology. Not only is technology a major economic sector globally, but whether it be for online shopping or email services, machine learning and AI are thoroughly **integrated** with the daily lives of the general public. Nevertheless, one must recognize the fast-paced development of technology can be difficult to sustain. The International Energy Agency estimates that energy consumption from AI data centers will double in the next two years, increasing carbon dioxide emissions expected to have a social cost of \$125 to \$140 billion.

Themes to Consider

It is important to foster technological innovation while regulating its use to protect consumers and safeguard public safety. Consider the **measures** that can be implemented globally and within involved nations to strengthen cybersecurity and protect individuals' privacy in an increasingly connected world. Existing privacy and security regulations are often insufficient for the emerging risks, necessitating updates to these laws to better address the new challenges. Effective regulation is essential to harnessing the potential of emerging technologies

while reducing their risks, but it is equally as important to not go overboard. To achieve governmental goals regarding public safety and clean energy (as data centers and servers consume much energy), public-private **cooperation**, in addition to multinational cooperation, will be crucial to address this issue given that most technologies are privately owned. That being said, it is vital to consider **ethics**, especially the ethical implications of AI in fields like healthcare, where leaders consider research and commercial use of patient data, and the ownership of AI-generated intellectual property.

Discussion Questions

1. How should governments, industry stakeholders, and civil society collaborate in shaping technology regulation and how should their roles weigh?
2. How can leaders ensure that regulations are efficient and can keep up with the rapid advancement of technology?
3. In what ways can international cooperation and collaboration enhance efforts to regulate emerging technologies on a global scale while still protecting business?

Resources

1. Browne, Ryan. "Italy Became the First Western Country to Ban ChatGPT. Here's What Other Countries Are Doing." CNBC, 17 Apr. 2023, <http://www.cnbc.com/2023/04/04/italy-has-banned-chatgpt-heres-what-other-countries-are-doing.html>.

Description: Describes Italy's ban on ChatGPT and explores how various countries are responding to and regulating AI technology.

2. Ethical and Social Implications of AI Use | The Princeton Review. <http://www.princetonreview.com/ai-education/ethical-and-social-implications-of-ai-use#:~:text=Privacy%20and%20Data%20Security,potentially%20be%20exploited%20or%20misused>.

(Highly Recommended) Description: Examines the growing influence of artificial intelligence in various sectors and the resulting ethical and societal challenges.

3. "EU AI Act: First Regulation on Artificial Intelligence | Topics | European Parliament." Topics | European Parliament, 6 Aug. 2023, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20230601STO93804/eu-ai-act-first-regulation-on-artificial-intelligence>.

Description: Explains the EU AI Act and outlines the classification of AI systems by risk level, describes specific regulations for high-risk applications, and notes the bans on systems that pose unacceptable risks.

4. Global Coalition for Digital Safety. <http://initiatives.weforum.org/global-coalition-for-digital-safety/home>.

(Highly Recommended) Description: This website has many resources regarding technology and its usage.

5. Nadeem, Reem, and Reem Nadeem. "Public Awareness of Artificial Intelligence in Everyday Activities." Pew Research Center, 14 Apr. 2024, <http://www.pewresearch.org/science/2023/02/15/public-awareness-of-artificial-intelligence-in-everyday-activities>.

Description: Discusses the extent of public awareness and understanding of AI's role in daily life based on a public poll-based study.

6. Santa Clara University. Technology Ethics - Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/technology-ethics>.

Description: Explores the concept of technology ethics, its growing importance due to advancements in technology, and the ethical considerations surrounding various technological innovations including artificial intelligence.

7. Zharovskikh, Anastasiya. "How Artificial Intelligence Will Change Decision Making." InData Labs, 4 June 2024, indatalabs.com/blog/artificial-intelligence-decision-making#:~:text=AI%20automated%20decision%20making%20allows,work%20relevant%20to%20their%20field.

Description: Discusses how artificial intelligence is revolutionizing decision-making in business by analyzing vast datasets.

8. Friis, Simon. "Eliminating Algorithmic Bias Is Just the Beginning of Equitable AI." Harvard Business Review, 29 Sept. 2023, hbr.org/2023/09/eliminating-algorithmic-bias-is-just-the-beginning-of-equitable-ai.

Description: Explores how artificial intelligence contributes to and exacerbates societal inequality through algorithmic biases.

9. HiddenLayer. "HiddenLayer AI Threat Landscape Report Finds That 77% of Companies Identified Breaches to Their AI in the Past Year." PR Newswire, 6 Mar. 2024, www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/hiddenlayer-ai-threat-landscape-report-finds-that-77-of-companies-identified-breaches-to-their-ai-in-the-past-year-302080705.html.

Description: A report that reveals significant security vulnerabilities and the urgent need for organizations to implement comprehensive strategies for AI models.

10. Bhutra, Sonal. "ChatGPT Uses 10 Times More Power Than Google Searches, Says Goldman Sachs." CNBCTV18, 28 June 2024, www.cnbctv18.com/technology/chatgpt-uses-10-times-more-power-than-google-searches-says-goldman-sachs-19435551.htm.

Description: Discusses the significant environmental impact of AI technologies.

11. Artificial Intelligence Risks: Data Privacy and Security | MedPro Group.
www.medpro.com/artificial-intelligence-risks-privacysecurity.

Description: Explores the risks to data privacy and security posed by artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare.